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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3345
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TOKYO 002029

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/07/2017

TAGS: ECON ETRD EAGR JA

SUBJECT: GOJ HUDDLING ABOUT BEEF

REF: TOKYO 1890

Classified By: Charge Joseph R. Donovan for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) Over Japan's Golden Week holiday and again on May 7 the Charge underscored with GOJ authorities Washington's strong concern about apparent GOJ backsliding (see reftel) on a deal to ease restrictions on U.S. beef exports to Japan. Vice Foreign Minister Yabunaka and Assistant Chief Cabinet Secretary Ando both conveyed their dismay that problems had

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emerged again. Ando told the Charge that he had convened a GOJ inter-agency meeting on Sunday, May 6, between officials at the Health (MHLW), Agriculture (MAFF), and Foreign Ministries (MOFA) to find a way forward. Chief Cabinet Secretary Shiozaki was directly engaged in the process,

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according to Ando. Subsequently, we have been told that another inter-agency meeting on the issue is set to take place in the Prime Minister's office later in the evening on May 7.

¶2. (C) Ando told the Charge that he was hoping a call could be made between Agriculture Minister Matsuoka and Agriculture Secretary Johanns if the GOJ could develop a unified position

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that Matsuoka could present. Without being prompted, Ando also indicated that a WTO case against Japan over the BSE/beef issue would not be in anybody's interest. According to MOFA officials in the Second North Americas Division, the GOJ is very aware of the concerns in Washington about MHLW's apparent unwillingness to audit all U.S. meat exporting facilities and also about the U.S. inter-agency meeting on May 7 in Washington to discuss the matter. The MOFA source said he hoped Matsuoka would be in a position to call Johanns "as soon as possible."

¶3. (C) Separately, we understand that Japanese importers of U.S. beef have also been actively lobbying MHLW and MAFF for a solution. Industry contacts have reportedly had minister-level discussions at both MHLW and MAFF and are advocating that the audits proceed as proposed by the United States. Japanese industry contacts also reportedly urged Minister Matsuoka to call Secretary Johanns to accept the U.S. proposed schedule but with the proviso that plants without a shipment history make 'sample' shipments to Japan.
DONOVAN